

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA: EGABINGTON: MAR

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S/S: MR. ORTIZ

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TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 090150

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FOL REPEAT BEIRUT 3291 SENT ACTION SECSTATE APR 13

QTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3291

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, LE, SY

SUBJ: FRANGIE REQUESTS U.S. "NO OBJECTION" TO PROPOSAL HE PLANS
TO MAKE TO ASAD ON SECURITY

1. IN CONTRAST WITH STATEMENTS MADE BY MOST OF THE PEOPLE
I SAW IN JOUNIEH TODAY, WHICH CONSISTED OF A REHASH OF
PREVIOUSLY STATED GENERALITIES, FRANGIE'S REMARKS WERE
QUITE SPECIFIC (FRANGIE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ADVISER
LUCIEN DAHDAH).

2. THE FIRST THING FRANGIE ASKED ME WAS WHAT THE SYRIAN
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REACTION WAS TO THE SECURITY AND CONSORTIUM IDEA. I

REPLIED AS I SAID I WOULD IN A PREVIOUS CABLE. ON THE SHORT TERM, ASAD SAW NO POINT IN TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER A FORCE OUT OF WARRING FACTIONS. AS FOR A CONSORTIUM ASAD WANTED TO TAKE NO ACTION FOR THE PRESENT AND TO AWAIT TO SEE WHAT THE NEW PRESIDENT HAD TO PROPOSE.

3. FRANGIE WAS SURPRISED BY THIS, SAYING ASAD'S REPLY TO HIM WAS MUCH LESS NEGATIVE. AFTER SAYING THIS, FRANGIE WENT INTO A LONG PLEAS ABOUT THE NECESSITY FOR SECURITY. WITHOUT SECURITY A NEW GOVT COULD NOT GET OFF THE GROUND. HE PLANNED HIMSELF THEREFORE TO GO TO ASAD ONCE MORE WITH A PROPOSAL. THE IDEA WOULD BE FOR THE NEW LEBANESE GOVT, ONCE IT WAS FORMED, TO CALL FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A CONSORTIUM IN WHICH SYRIA AND ONE OTHER MUTUALLY AGREED ARAB COUNTRY WOULD PARTICIPATE, ALONG WITH THE U.S., FRANCE AND AN EEC COUNTRY.

4. THE CONSORTIUM WOULD OVERSEE THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON. THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF RECONSTRUCTION WOULD BE PARCELLED OUT TO THE CONSORTIUM MEMBER COUNTRIES. THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO SYRIA ALONE OR WITH ONE OTHER COUNTRY AGREEABLE TO SYRIA.

5. FRANGIE WOULD ASK ASAD'S APPROVAL OF THE CONSORTIUM PLAN NOW, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE FORMAL INITIATIVE WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM THE NEXT LEBANESE GOVT. BEFORE APPROACHING ASAD, HOWEVER, HE WANTED TO OBTAIN U.S. ASSURANCE THAT WE HAD NO OBJECTIONS.

6. I REPLIED THAT THE LEBANESE GOVT WAS OF COURSE FREE TO APPROACH SYRIA AT ANY TIME IT DESIRES. AS FAR AS OUR THINKING ABOUT THE PROPOSAL WAS CONCERNED, I WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WASHINGTON. I PROMISED ONLY A RAPID ANSWER, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

7. I BROUGHT TO FRANGIE'S ATTENTION THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR HIM NOT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT ANY ACTION HE UNDERTOOK BE CONSTRUED AS A PRETEXT TO DELAY THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT. HE RATHER SOLEMNLY ASSURED ME THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE. HE PLANNED TO
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ISSUE THE DECREE COVERING THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THIS WEEK AND EXPECTED THE NEW PRESIDENT TO BE ELECTED NEXT WEEK. OBTAINING ASAD'S AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD GIVE THE NEW GOVT A BETTER CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL. HE INDICATED HE WOULD NOT DRAG HIS FEET IF ASAD'S APPROVAL WAS NOT OBTAINED AND I ENCOURAGED HIM IN THIS DETERMINATION.

8. I AM FULLY AWARE THAT FRANGIE'S PROPOSAL IS NOT
FOOLPROOF. ASAD WOULD PROBABLY BUY IT IF IT IS

PRETTY CLEAR THAT HE ALONE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR
LEBANESE SECURITY, REGARDLESS OF THE WINDOW DRESSING,
AND THERE ARE INDICATIONS IN RECENT COMMUNICATIONS
FROM YOU THAT WE MAY NOT BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT THIS
CONCEPT. THEN THERE IS THE QUESTION OF COMMITTING OUR-
SELVES ALREADY TO THE IDEA OF A CONSORTIUM, EVEN IN AN
INDIRECT WAY. WHETHER THE NEW GOL WOULD LIKE THE IDEA
IS ANOTHER QUESTION. NEVERTHELESS, THE GENERAL
EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY IS CERTAINLY
GENUINE AND I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND FAVORABLY
TO FRANGIE, EVEN IF THIS WERE TO BE IN THE FORM OF SOME
COUNTERPROPOSAL MORE ACCEPTABLE TO US.
BROWN

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